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U.S. Already Ahead

Is Defense Buildup Really Necessary?

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Special to The Bee

AMERICANS DESERVE some view of the realities of the arms race other than that fed them by the military industrial complex or the Republican Party; they are being deceived about the level of Soviet defense spending, about the quality of our strategic forces and about who is really preparing for limited nuclear war.

President Ford raised the issue of measuring the arms race during his election campaign when he arranged for an independent analysis of classified information prepared by the CIA. The reviewers included such hard-liners as Richard Pipes, a Harvard professor currently on loan to the National Security Council as White House resident Soviet specialist.

An example of Pipes' extreme hard-line perspective is that he had to be squelched by the White House last spring for talking about the "inevitability of war" (presumably with the Soviet Union). Ironically, the phrase — not originally intended to mean war between capitalist and Communist states — is a quotation from Lenin, disowned by Khrushchev and subsequent Soviet leaders because of the dangers inherent in any nuclear confrontation. The doctrine of peaceful co-existence, along with abundant debate in Soviet military circles on the inability of the Soviet Union to survive nuclear war, was completely ignored by Pipes in his influential article published in 1977 by "Commentary."

AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW of our position in the arms race emerges upon examination of overall spending figures and analysis of our strategic weapons capabilities vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

Estimates of Soviet defense expenditures can be calculated in several ways, each yielding a different set of figures. The CIA method is to measure Soviet weapons production and manpower through various intelligence channels (such as satellites) and then attach a dollar figure representing what we would have to spend to match the Soviet effort.

This method has been challenged in many scholarly journals. In the first place, it is ridiculous to evaluate structurally different economies and defense establishments in a single currency when the countries are monetarily isolated. What is relatively cheap here (such as designer jeans) may be very expensive there — as any traveler accosted by a Soviet teen-ager in Red Square can confirm.

Secondly, although the Soviet armed forces are made up of larger numbers of soldiers, they receive miniscule salaries, often serve as border guards, work on vast construction projects and must help farmers to bring in the harvest. Nonetheless, the CIA measures Soviet pay by U.S. standards — a clear distortion which ignores any difference in morale and efficiency between our military and theirs.

Also, our total strategic forces require 75,000 personnel, yet an equivalent Soviet arsenal requires five times as many.

In addition, 30 percent of our weapons are so technically

sophisticated as to be beyond Soviet ability to manufacture, in some cases for the next 20 years, as reported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in congressional testimony. If Soviet analysts used our methods of evaluating military hardware which they cannot produce, the ruble cost would be infinite.

According to CIA statistics, the Soviet Union was spending up to 40 percent more than we were before the recent Carter-Reagan buildup. A parallel method using rubles to evaluate our comparative efforts would indicate, some experts say, that we are spending three times what the Soviet Union spends. Franklyn Holzmann of Tufts University, an economist specializing in Soviet defense spending, has placed expenditures by both powers about equal in 1979.

An example of statistical manipulation illustrates the need for caution in interpreting figures supplied by the CIA: Even though there was no change in the rate of Soviet spending, in 1976 the agency concluded that the Soviet arms industry was as inefficient as the rest of the economy; and so its defense effort rose, statistically, from 6-8 percent of Soviet gross national product to 11-12 percent overnight, with no increase in force levels. Hard-liners are tempted to cite this change as proof that the Soviets were suddenly spending more. In fact, this should be interpreted to mean their defense was costing them relatively twice as much, or that, on at least one issue, the CIA has been wrong by a factor of almost 100 percent.

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The discussion in Washington of the Soviet strategic situation does not consider geopolitical issues. We, for example, are not confronted with one billion hostile Chinese, allied with, if not armed by our arch rival, on a border comparable to that of Canada. Nor is the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini president of Mexico. Nor is 60 percent of our army unable to speak our official language.

COMBINING THE strategic potential of the superpowers with that of their respective allies shows us to be ahead by at least 10 percent. According to the "Wall Street Journal" (citing CIA figures), U.S. arms spending in 1978 was \$105 billion for a NATO total of \$180 billion, while Warsaw Treaty Organization expenditures totaled only \$160 billion. (Soviet allies spend less for defense than our allies; this is partly because of the superior economic base of Western versus Eastern Europe and partly because of the historic hatred of Eastern Europeans for Russia. Imagine how frightening a nuclear-armed Poland would appear to the Kremlin.)

A more realistic estimate of the arms balances can be obtained from figures published annually by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute which do not have the statistical quirks that are built into CIA calculations. These figures indicate that NATO has spent at least half again as much as WTO on defense every year since 1950.

This analysis does not include foreign arms sales. The U.S. has historically sold twice as much in that market as the USSR and now our allies help us keep that lead. The Carter and Reagan defense increases make current figures even more favorable to the United States.

ACCURATE measurement of the arms race requires not only an evaluation of overall military expenditures but also a translation of technical issues, such as explosive yield or accuracy, into an assessment of strategic wherewithal.

The usual measure of a strategic nuclear arsenal is a notion called "lethality," which includes the blast effect of a weapon, discounted into what is known as "effective yield" and divided by a measure of the area it is likely to hit. For a larger weapon, the effective yield is relatively smaller than the total blast, simply because most of the explosion would be upward and sideways (useless on the ground near a hardened missile silo, but serving as a warning to visitors from outer space, "Stay away from this planet"). A small weapon, if delivered accurately, can be extremely effective.

In fact, two of the three bombs on the Mark 12-A warhead with its NS-20 guidance system arming our Minuteman III missiles are supposedly capable of knocking out a Soviet missile in its silo. That is why the Soviets asked us, in June 1978, not to deploy the new warhead. We did, nonetheless; and Carter's decision to develop the cruise missile with even greater accuracy will give us, by 1985, the potential to wage pre-emptive war. President Reagan's decisions to build the MX and to deploy the D-5 missile on our Trident submarines will have the same effect, since these are counter-force weapons with terminal guidance systems.

NOT ONLY OUR weapons capability but also our strategic policies are a cause of great concern to the Soviet Union, particularly our persistent refusal to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons. Thanks to Carter's Presidential Directive Number 59, we now have a national goal of obtaining the ability to wage so-called "limited" nuclear war.

An historical comparison of the land-based missile lethality of the two superpowers developed from published U.S. intelligence estimates (in support of Minuteman "vulnerability") clearly shows a statistical trend favorable to the Soviet Union. However, the absolute magnitude of U.S. lethality is constantly increasing. Such comparisons have led to the supposed "window of vulnerability" thesis when, in fact, only 15 percent of our strategic forces are to be located on land by 1985, versus 75 percent for the Soviet Union.

(The real question is whether the concept of lethality has meaning anymore, since one U.S. submarine is sufficient to destroy all major cities and military installations within the Soviet Union. To borrow a phrase from Churchill, it may not be important how high the rubble bounces.)

It is important to note that these figures include the one-third of Soviet strategic weapons deployed against China, yet they neglect the nuclear weapons at the disposal of the British and French, accounting for Brezhnev's prompt rejection of Reagan's recent disarmament proposal. Prime Minister Thatcher, for instance, plans to add Trident submarines, which will improve our allies' capability; the Soviets have not allowed their Eastern European clients access to nuclear weapons.

ON THE BASIS of lethality it is also interesting to compare Soviet submarines with ours. Although the Soviet Union has more subs than the United States, she has far fewer warheads and is unable to keep the fleet at sea. We have somewhat more than half of our fleet on station, as opposed to one-seventh for the USSR. Submarine lethality figures (discounted by actual numbers at sea) indicate that while the gap in favor of the United States is narrowing, we maintain a substantial lead in absolute terms.

THE THIRD LEG of the U.S. triad is the strategic bomber force. Before including these figures in a grand calculation, a few comments on the "aging" B-52 are in order. The comparable Soviet weapons, the Bear and the Bison, are at least as old as the B-52; they are also slower and fewer in number. The more modern Soviet Backfire could be counted as a strategic weapon, but only on a subsonic suicide mission to Cuba. The U.S. FB-111, based in Europe, is comparable to the Backfire and, in a stretched version, would have a range about twice that of the Backfire with four times the payload. Also, the United States has an independent tanker fleet plus worldwide bases, while the Russians use half of their Bears.

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and Bisons as tankers. Finally, the B-52 is constantly being upgraded in guidance systems, electronic counter-measures and terrain contour navigational systems. Ten billion dollars have been spent modernizing the B-52 fleet in recent years. SIPRI does not consider the Soviet air arm a strategic force when compared to that of the United States.

Adding bomber lethality to the other figures nets the total 1980 lethality of the United States at 197 percent that of the Soviet Union. Is it really necessary to bring back double-digit inflation, assured by our current defense buildup, when the strategic balance is so clearly in our favor?

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?
Without the planned MX deployment, with only nominal increase in the \$2 billion each Trident submarine, and with deployment of the extremely accurate cruise missile (which the Brookings Institution says may torpedo an arms agreement), it is projected the United States will have by 1985 an in-

crease in total lethality of almost 400 percent. Implementation of Reagan's decision to deploy 36 MX missiles in Titan II silos by 1986 will increase their lethality by 68,900 percent! Our total lethality will nearly double in one year, with the planned limited deployment of that system, and Reagan plans to build 64 more.

Do we need the MX? Do we need the projected number of Trident submarines? Do we need the Reagan defense budget increases over and above the weapons provided for by the Carter administration?

I agree with the American godfather of the Cold War, George Kennan, that it is indeed time to stop this madness. We should renounce the first use of nuclear weapons and refuse to deploy counter-force weapons provided the Soviets do the same.

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